

**All States in NAEP 2000:**

**Recommendations  
for the Commissioner of  
Education Statistics**

## The AllStates 2000 Task Force

Convened by the Commissioner of Education Statistics, Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., the AllStates 2000 Task Force was charged with the mission to develop an action plan to encourage and support participation of all states and jurisdictions in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the year 2000. The Task Force, led by William T. Randall, former chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, includes some of our most respected educational policymakers and practitioners:

<b>William T. Randall</b>	Chair, AllStates 2000 Task Force; Former Commissioner of Education, Colorado; Former Member and Former Chair, NAGB
<b>Jodie Butler</b>	Education Advisor for the Governor, Iowa
<b>Donald Covey</b>	Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Phoenix Special Programs and Academies, Arizona
<b>Marilyn Gogolin</b>	Deputy Superintendent, Los Angeles County, California
<b>Donald Gossett</b>	Former Superintendent, Libertyville High School, Chicago, Illinois
<b>Patricia Hayes</b>	Chairman, Colorado State Board of Education
<b>Marla McGhee</b>	Principal, Hill Elementary School, Austin, Texas
<b>Kenneth Nelson</b>	Executive Director, National Education Goals Panel
<b>Lynnisie Roehrich-Patrick</b>	Assistant Commissioner for Finance, Accountability, and Business, Tennessee Department of Education
<b>Peter Reed</b>	Coordinator of Assessment Center Programs, South Carolina Department of Education
<b>Norma Sermon-Boyd</b>	Superintendent, Jones County School System, North Carolina
<b>Bettye Topps</b>	Director for Professional Development and Leadership, Washington, DC
<b>E. Roger Trent</b>	Testing Director, Ohio Department of Education
<b>Michael Ward</b>	State Superintendent of Public Instruction, North Carolina
<b>Mossi White</b>	Chair, Provo County Board of Education, Utah
<b>Gayle Williams-Simmons</b>	Teacher, Miami-Dade Public Schools, Florida

### Task Force Activities

The Task Force heard from focus groups comprised of twenty-seven educators from different geographic areas and job positions, and with different knowledge of NAEP to help gain a more thorough understanding of the barriers to participation at state, city, district, and school levels. They also commissioned case profiles of states with different participation histories. The Task Force was convened by the National Center for Education Statistics and was supported by Westat, Inc. and the Education Statistics Services Institute.

Whereas

Education is key to democracy and to the nation's future economic prosperity, and

Whereas

Policymakers, educators, and the general public have a need and a right to know the quality of education provided in the nation's schools, and

Whereas

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only continuing, comprehensive measure of student learning in our country, and

Whereas

The year 2000 is the end of a decade of significant education reform and the beginning of a new millennium,

The Commissioner of Education Statistics, Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., established as a goal that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) secure participation of

## All States and Jurisdictions in NAEP 2000.

To accomplish his goal, the Commissioner appointed the *AllStates 2000 Task Force* to develop actions for NCES and its partners to enhance and support state participation in NAEP 2000.

Assessment of student academic performance is a dramatically changing element in the U.S. education system. From a low-stakes research activity thirty years ago, assessment has proliferated at all levels and has become transformed in terms of the stakes involved and for whom. NAEP, a voluntary assessment conducted regularly since 1969, must now compete in a new environment.

- ★ Virtually every state and local school district now has one or more assessment programs administered for a wide variety of purposes. Educators contend that the school day and school year are packed with testing activities. *NAEP has to compete for precious time within the school day, time teachers are reluctant to give up.*
- ★ Local and state tests hold students, teachers, schools, and school systems accountable for student performance and often involve rewards and punishments. *Changing and intensified stakes have complicated the incentive structure in which NAEP operates. Performance on NAEP does not carry consequences for students, teachers, or schools.*

Under these new circumstances, the challenge for NAEP is to operate and secure its position as an integral part of a national system of assessment. Often called the "Nation's Report Card," NAEP is the only nationally representative, continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various academic subject areas. Administered in grades 4, 8, and 12, NAEP plays an essential role in evaluating the conditions and progress of the nation's education enterprise.

## The AllStates 2000 Task Force

The AllStates 2000 Task Force began its work in July 1998, worked through the summer and fall, and came to believe, individually and as a group, that the goal of having all states participate in NAEP 2000 is both a highly desirable and an achievable goal.

- ★ It is desirable as a measure of student progress after a decade of intensive education reform across the country, and as a benchmark to mark the beginning of a new century and millennium.
- ★ It is achievable because, when they understand the purposes and benefits, educators and policy makers value the assessment for its contributions to education policies and programs.

The Task Force respectfully submits this report to the Commissioner of Education Statistics for his consideration.

## The Plan

Explicit barriers to state-level and school participation were identified during the Task Force deliberations. The Task Force developed specific action steps to ameliorate the barriers and to increase the likelihood of all states participating in NAEP 2000. The action steps are defined by a slate of tasks and activities for implementation over the next year. Implementation of the full slate of activities will require engagement of all of the NCES partners, including the individual states, in the campaign for all states in NAEP 2000.

While the action steps and some activities have long-term implications for NAEP participation, care was taken by the Task Force to focus on state and school participation in the year 2000. Furthermore, the Task Force did not attempt to balance the proposed activities with available resources: staffing and/or money, or with legal or technical constraints. The Commissioner, in the quest to reach his ambitious goal, will need to weigh each recommendation against its potential benefits and the feasibility of successful implementation within the time and resources available.

The NCES staff worked closely with the Task Force throughout its deliberations, and, as a consequence, began several activities growing from the work of the Task Force and embodied in these recommendations. The Task Force supports these efforts to jumpstart the campaign for all states in 2000.

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The following sections present four major barriers that inhibit or prevent state and local participation and describe the slate of recommended actions to ameliorate the effects of each barrier. The final section presents documentation underlying the identification of the barriers. The examples presented are for illustrative purposes only and are neither comprehensive nor representative of all information reviewed by the Task Force. The poster restates the barriers, major actions, and the individual tasks and activities.

## The Barriers

### 1. Lack of Knowledge about NAEP

Information is not communicated effectively to all stakeholders. NAEP's purposes, roles, and contributions are vague and unclear to many educators who are essential for successful implementation and use of the program. Many state and local policymakers, educators, and teachers do not support NAEP because they do not know enough about NAEP.

### 2. Imbalance between Burden and Benefits

Procedures for participation in NAEP require time and resources from thousands of state and local educators and teachers. The states recruit the schools, and local educators administer the assessment in those schools. Many feel there is insufficient or no return for their efforts.

### 3. Lack of Ownership and Buy-in

Too frequently, NAEP is viewed as a federal initiative rather than as a state's own program and as an important state data source. The relationship between NAEP and the states needs to be redefined as a partnership, with each having clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and with each having a voice in decision making.

### 4. Underutilized Support Structure

Many educational associations and related national organizations and the business community generally support NAEP and are some of the major users of NAEP results. In the early years of State NAEP, these leadership organizations were the prime motivators for state participation. But while continuing to be supportive of State NAEP, their support has become more routine and less visible. Renewed commitment and action are needed to draw on this support.

## The Recommendations

### Lack of Knowledge about NAEP

#### Action 1.1 Broadcast NAEP Information to Targeted Stakeholders

- ★ Develop a national publicity campaign to communicate the purposes, components, and benefits of NAEP. The campaign should communicate why and how NAEP is a “national treasure” and should:
  - Focus on a few powerful messages.
  - Target state and local policy makers and education administrators who influence participation decisions.
  - Inform teachers about how American education benefits from their participation in NAEP.
  - Use a variety of media including high quality, short, targeted videotapes, pamphlets, and brochures.
- ★ Contribute to professional journals and education periodicals that reach the targeted decision-makers.
- ★ Organize presentations by highly respected colleagues at state and national meetings and conventions attended by the targeted stakeholders.
- ★ Demonstrate the importance and utility of NAEP using the 1998 state reading and writing reports.

#### Action 1.2 Educate NAEP Participants

- ★ Improve the NAEP Web site to be more useful and accessible.
  - Target information and features to major stakeholders and decision makers who make participation decisions.
  - Develop a list serve to provide state staff regular information during the recruiting period.
  - Use the web to communicate directly to teachers.
  - Advertise the web site within the education community.
- ★ Offer training and workshops targeting key state and local individuals.
- ★ Train and support state staff on how to use NAEP information and on how to recruit schools.

## Imbalance between Burden and Benefits

### Action 2.1 Provide Assistance to States

- ★ Enhance the state-level assessment/accountability infrastructure through:
  - A national forum for professional and technical development and for sharing among state assessment personnel.
  - Training for targeted state staff in testing and psychometric processes.
  - Models and materials for using NAEP information in state policies and programs.
- ★ Highlight states that have used NAEP in reform efforts.
- ★ Provide models for using NAEP frameworks in state curricula and assessments.
- ★ Provide sample NAEP test items for use in assessments, in professional development of teachers, and in communicating the purposes and scope of NAEP.
- ★ Assist in linking state curriculum frameworks and assessment results with NAEP.
- ★ Reduce the required state sample size.

### Action 2.2 Provide Support for Schools

- ★ Establish a policy of “once a NAEP participant, always a NAEP participant” including continuing communications with schools throughout the NAEP cycle.
- ★ Acknowledge schools which participate in NAEP and provide tangible recognition.
- ★ Develop models for states to use in providing professional development credit for teachers who participate in the NAEP training and assessment administration.
- ★ Expand training to include post administration interpretation and use of NAEP.
- ★ Reduce the amount and complexity of paperwork during test administration including teacher questionnaires and that related to special students.
- ★ Establish a web network with targeted features for assessment administrators and teachers.
- ★ Develop a web-based, interactive reporting feature for showing NAEP results by different demographic, size, and urbanicity profiles.
- ★ Develop NAEP information and materials for improving instruction.
- ★ Provide resources (e.g. cash awards, funding for substitutes, assessment materials) to schools to offset the burden.



## Lack of Ownership and Buy-in

### Action 3.1 Expand Support of State NAEP Infrastructure

- ★ Expand support of key state liaison organizations such as the Education Information and Advisory Committee (EIAC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the NAEP Network including:
  - Formalize and expand opportunities for state input into program and policy decisions.
  - Provide training and support in use and interpretation of NAEP, in recruitment of schools to participate, and in coupling NAEP (e.g., Frameworks, items, and assessments) to state curriculum and assessments.
  - Spotlight successful state activities using NAEP.
  - Support NAEP activities as part of the CCSSO Large Scale Assessment Conference.
  - Convene a NAEP conference on what works in assessment.
- ★ Communicate to the entire assessment community a NAEP commitment to build and support the state/national assessment infrastructure.

### Action 3.2 Individualize and Personalize State Support

- ★ Develop, in cooperation with states, individualized plans for working with states:
  - Base plans on individual state experiences with NAEP, their own state assessment/accountability programs, and the educational context within the individual states.
  - Include individual state profiles of key decision makers, decision making roles, and decision procedures at both state and local levels.
  - Structure around both the initial state sign-up (April/May, 1999) and the recruitment of schools (October, 1999–January, 2000).
- ★ Personalize recruitment using a peer-to-peer (e.g., chief state school officer to chief state school officer) approach.
- ★ Use NAEP leadership (e.g., U.S. Department of Education and NCES senior staff, NAGB members, and contractor staff) to target and personalize recruitment.

## Underutilized Support Structures

### Action 4.1 Involve National Organizations

- ★ Make targeted approaches to key organizations representing major state education policy and administrative groups providing information on and soliciting support for state participation in NAEP 2000.
  - Key organizations include the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National School Boards Association, and the American Association of School Administrators.
- ★ Solicit support from national education organizations in the form of endorsements for NAEP 2000, journal and periodical articles featuring 1998 NAEP results and the 2000 assessment, and participation in national conferences.
  - Specific organizations include the Learning First Alliance, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers.
- ★ Identify and train representatives from individual organizations to serve on a NAEP field team to work with states and schools. The NAEP field team provides a personal link to their respective constituency groups.

### Action 4.2 Involve State Organizations

- ★ Create a speakers team to represent NAEP at state meetings.
- ★ Develop a portable NAEP display for use at state-level meetings.
- ★ Use NAEP field staff to support communications with and presentations to state education organizations.

## The Documentation

Before developing recommendations for enhancing and supporting state participation in NAEP 2000, the Task Force made the strategic decision to first identify the reasons states choose to participate and, conversely, the reasons they choose not to participate. The Task Force met with staff from NCES, NAGB and the grantees administering the assessments, and with participating and non-participating state and local educators. In addition, the Task Force commissioned studies of states ranging from those with histories of participating in the assessment and using NAEP products to states that are non-participants.

Following are brief summaries of five case studies and three focus groups of state and local educators. They are presented here for illustrative purposes only. The participants in the focus groups and the case study states were selected to provide a wide range of perspectives, not to be representative of a larger group.

### Case Studies

Based on their histories of participation and use of NAEP products and services, six states were selected for individual study of issues related to NAEP participation: problems, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. Telephone and in-person interviews were conducted, primarily with the state testing directors.

Five of the state case studies are summarized below to inform and help define the barriers identified by the Task Force.

#### Lack of Knowledge about NAEP

This state exemplifies *not the lack of support* but the effects of strong support and effective communication. Over 27 years ago, a Citizens' Committee on Education recommended that elements of the national assessment program be included in state education policy. Legislation stating it as policy was passed in 1985, and NAEP participation was mandated in 1990. As soon as NAEP samples are identified, a letter is sent to the schools from the state's Director of the Division of Public Schools. It informs them that they will participate instead of asking them if they want to participate in a voluntary program. Participation in NAEP is an expectation. In rare instances when a school questions participation, district staff generally step in to ensure cooperation. NAEP is an accepted part of the state assessment program. The legal requirement and the strong support for NAEP at the state and district levels are reflected in high levels of school participation across the state.

## Imbalance between Burden and Benefits

In this small state, every school is in the NAEP sample. The state Secretary of Education sends a letter to all schools, informing them that it is time for the assessment and detailing the preparation needed. The underlying assumption is that every school is expected to participate. Not surprisingly, schools often complain about the burden created by NAEP: the training required for test administrators, the disruption to classes in every school, and, most important, the assessment time for students who are already tested in five content areas for the state assessment. But participation rates are high, and recruitment has not been a problem. This probably can be attributed to the strong support at the state level. The state has always participated in NAEP and has used the results in developing state content frameworks, examining the factors associated with achievement, promoting interest and awareness in specific content areas, and in providing a means for comparing their students' achievement to that of students in other states. NAEP is perceived to be an integral part of the state's assessment program so that despite complaints about the burden and lack of student data or school feedback associated with NAEP administration, the state's schools accept that burden and participate—virtually without exception.

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The burden in another small state is not so much on the school districts, since only a sample of schools is included in the NAEP assessment, but on the state assessment office. The office has only one staff member: the State Assessment Director, who does everything, including the coordination of NAEP. The state strongly supports NAEP, making recruiting easier, and the Commissioner of Education helps enlist participation by working with professional organizations for school administrators and sending letters to school districts, underscoring NAEP's importance. To follow up the letters, the State Assessment Director telephones each school and urges participation. Participation rates have been high, so replacement schools have not been contacted. After NAEP is administered, the State Assessment Director sends letters of appreciation to all participating schools.

Although the State Assessment Director finds the contacts with schools useful in facilitating communication about assessment in general, the time expenditure is considerable. The state is further burdened by the lack of resources to send out NAEP materials. At the school level, the burden includes the difficulty in finding a sufficient space for administering NAEP in some "portable school villages," the disruption to classes created by stratified student sampling, and the training required for the teachers who administer State NAEP in each school.

The state's Governor, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Assessment Director all view NAEP as important, and their support has helped keep levels of participation high, despite the burden.

## Lack of Ownership and Buy-in

In this state, students generally achieve good scores on NAEP assessments, but the schools and districts in the state have no sense of ownership in NAEP. The lack of school and district-level scores is cited as the greatest obstacle in enlisting NAEP participation, and refusals to participate are increasingly accepted.

At about the time that NAEP was to be administered in 1998, the state's well-established grade 10 assessment was changed from a routine grade-level test to a graduation qualifying exam, making it a high-stakes test and the center of heated controversy. School districts, under fire for the grade 10 exam, did not want to exacerbate the situation by scheduling another assessment, and the standard for participation could not be reached. The State Department of Education accepted the refusals, and the state participated only in the national sample of NAEP, not State NAEP. While more strenuous recruitment is planned next time and more schools are expected to participate in State NAEP, the trend is toward no consequences for refusals to participate in NAEP and hence lower rates of participation. The connections between NAEP and this state and its districts and schools are tenuous.

## Underutilized Support Structure

In this state, NAEP is strongly affected by a State Board of Education policy placing the decision to participate squarely in the hands of the school districts. While the State Superintendent sends out letters to all school districts in the sample emphasizing NAEP's importance, and the State Assessment Director contacts each school district by telephone enlisting participation, refusals are accepted without protest from the state or district. As a result, in the 1998 administration of State NAEP only about 68 percent of the schools in the sample participated, placing it below the 70 percent required. NAEP scores could not be reported making it harder to recruit schools in 2000.

NAEP results have been used in this state to inform education policy at the state level; however, little attention is paid to NAEP at the local level. The local focus, particularly by administrators, is on the state assessment, which is administered at about the same time as NAEP and is a high-stakes assessment. The lack of support for NAEP can be attributed to three factors: (1) the emphasis on the state assessment; (2) a discontinuation of financial incentives previously offered to schools in the NAEP sample by the state; and (3) the costs that schools must bear for teacher travel and substitutes so that NAEP administrators can be trained. Faced with the profound consequences associated with the state assessment, and the lack of consequences associated with NAEP, administrators in this state are increasingly saying "No" to NAEP.

## Focus Groups

Twenty-seven educators in three different focus groups shared their ideas and experiences focusing on why they did or did not participate in recent NAEP administrations and on suggestions for making participation more attractive to states and schools. All conversations were recorded, and an analysis was conducted to capture and prioritize main ideas on problems and recommendations.

While many issues were raised and discussed, the ten issues presented below represent the main points made by focus group members. They are presented in order of the number of times the issue was mentioned.

Rank	Issue
1	Abundance of assessments: too many for the available resources in states and schools; NAEP has to compete for scarce time and resources
2	Lack of return or utility for participants (especially for schools)
3	Misunderstood or unknown purpose of NAEP
4	Lack of local excitement for NAEP
5	The high level of technical quality of NAEP (considered a main benefit)
6	Lack of information regarding design, results, and uses of NAEP
7	Lack of communication between state and local educators regarding NAEP
8	General administrative procedures and differences between National and State NAEP
9	Need for other value added components
10	Alignment with state assessments

The need for NAEP to compete with the growing number of state and local assessments was the most often mentioned issue for each of the three stakeholder groups. School-level representatives dominated the discussion on the second issue, lack of return or utility. "It doesn't have any practical relevance for those who are responsible for implementing it," was one member's comment.

The NAEP training was rated as excellent and useful beyond the administration of NAEP, but there was a consensus that administration of State NAEP took more time and resources than the National NAEP. There was a perception that there is an inadequate return on the investment from a school perspective.

The high technical quality of the NAEP assessment and the validity of the results were applauded by the focus groups. One focus group member stated, "...for some teachers this is the first time they've ever had a chance to sit down and look at some darn fine assessments." Most agreed that NAEP was a pioneer in assessment, and a role model for other education evaluations.

## The Conclusion

NAEP, the only nationally representative, continuing measure of what students know and can do, is a primary indicator for guiding ambitious national priorities for preparing the nation's students to meet the technological, scientific, and economic challenges of the 21st century. It is essential to have the most comprehensive picture possible of the condition of education in this country at the end of one decade and at the beginning of a new one.

It is only with full participation from states and jurisdictions that the picture of educational progress in this country can be completed. The Commissioner of Education Statistics, NCES, NAGB, and the U.S. Department of Education are committed to addressing the concerns of state and local educators and to support fully their participation in NAEP 2000.

The AllStates 2000 Task Force found that almost all state and local educators generally support NAEP and the purposes of the assessment. The Task Force believes by

- ★ Increasing awareness and understanding of NAEP and its benefits to the education enterprise,
- ★ Offsetting the burden by administering the assessment by providing support for states and schools participating in NAEP,
- ★ Enhancing the NAEP partnership with states, and
- ★ Re-energizing the membership organizations and business community in the support of NAEP

that the Commissioner of Education Statistics can achieve his goal of all states and jurisdictions participating in NAEP 2000.